



He Speaks: Finding Christ in the Days of Lent

Fifth Sunday of Lent

Readings: Ezekiel 37:12-14, Psalm 130:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, Romans 8:8-11, John 11:1-45

"Lazarus, come out!"

If there is a biblical story that is brimming with genuine, raw, and heartfelt human emotion, today's Gospel is it. It's the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. This has it all: sadness, anger, fear, dread, connection, empathy, and then awe, joy, and astonishment.

There are, however, some moments in this story that are confusing. After hearing Lazarus was sick, Jesus stayed two days longer. When he heard Lazarus had died, he said he was going to go wake him up. Naturally, the disciples were confused and concerned. Jesus was walking right back into a potential trap—the Jews had just tried to stone him in Judea. If Lazarus was dead, it was too late anyway; why go back and risk it? When it was clear that Jesus' mind was made up, Thomas said, essentially, Well, where he goes, we go, even if it means death, not realizing yet how close to the truth he was.

So if all this wasn't gut-wrenching enough, by the time Jesus made it to the outskirts of town, everyone was still in shock and mourning Lazarus' death, and Jesus joined right in, weeping himself. He was surrounded by people who KNEW what Jesus could do. Jesus could have saved him... Lazarus wouldn't be dead right now if Jesus had only been here.

When Jesus got to the tomb, it was probably expected that he would mourn with the others, not ask for the grave to be opened. By this time, it had been four days. And "dead is dead," so Martha said what anyone would have: this is going to stink. But Jesus was unstoppable. After he prayed, he "cried out in a loud voice,"

"Lazarus, come out!"

Imagine gasps. The clamor. The shocked expressions. And then, Lazarus came out of the grave. Alive.

We read this story in Lent to acknowledge that it is the pivotal moment in Jesus' ministry. This is the event that would lead directly to his arrest and eventual execution. This was a miracle that couldn't be swept under the rug, minimized, or explained away. Lazarus was dead—four days dead—and yet came out of the tomb alive when Jesus called him. It was more than the Jewish leaders could handle.

For us, this moment can be emotional, meaningful, and deeply personal. Jesus calls Lazarus

his friend—and he calls us friends, too. And he is calling each of us back to life. To step out of whatever keeps us separated from him: fear, anger, jealousy, illusions, distrust, defensiveness, old habits, or emotional blind spots. As we near Holy Week, can we listen for his voice? Can we hear him calling us, too, to come out?

Consider:

This long Scripture passage unfolds in several movements—each one mirroring a movement of our own hearts. Take a moment to sit with these movements and notice where they echo your own experience:

- Naming the Loss (Lord, if you had been here, this might not have happened.)
- Sitting in the Delay (I am waiting for you, and I don't yet understand why.)
- Bringing the Grief to Jesus (You see and receive my pain for what it is.)
- Hearing the Truth Again ("I am the resurrection and the life.")
- He Weeps With Me (I am not alone in what hurts.)
- Standing at the Tomb (I face what feels absolutely final, and you ask me to trust you here.)
- Rising When He Calls (Nothing is stronger than your voice.)

Whisper Prayer:

Yes, Lord. I have come to believe.

Listening with the Church — Fifth Sunday of Lent

Unbound Together

After Jesus calls Lazarus out of the tomb, he says to those gathered, "Untie him and let him go" (John 11:44). The miracle isn't just in rising—it's in being set free and guided back into life with the support of others. In the same way, our faith isn't meant to be lived in isolation. The Catechism reminds us that the parish is the "community of the faithful" and a "visible center of unity" where the Church is present in daily life (CCC 2179). We are strengthened, encouraged, and sometimes unbound through the support, prayer, and example of our fellow believers.

This week, consider: What binds you in fear, habit, or doubt? Who in your parish, family, or circle of friends helps you walk into the freedom Jesus offers? And how might you be a source of that same support for someone else?